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INFO RUEHHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7819
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2137
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1659
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5749
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5492
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2120
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2007

In Today's Papers

Buyukanit Continues US Visit
All papers report that on Thursday, Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief General Yasar Buyukanit told a press conference in Washington after meeting with Vice President Dick Cheney and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley that he thought the US government "very determined" in their efforts to counter the Armenian genocide resolution in the US Congress as well as in the fight against PKK terrorism. Papers report Buyukanit said his scheduled meeting with US House Foreign Relations Committee head Tom Lantos, canceled yesterday due to bad weather conditions, is to take place on Friday. Buyukanit and Lantos are expected to focus on the Armenian resolution as the main subject of the meeting.

Olmert Meets Turkish Leaders in Ankara
All papers report visiting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his Turkish counterpart Erdogan held a joint press conference in Ankara after a meeting on Thursday. Olmert accepted Erdogan's proposal to send a team of technical experts to Jerusalem to inspect the controversial road building work near al-Aqsa Mosque. "We have nothing to hide," Olmert stressed, "The work is being done outside the Temple Mount area. We are very happy to host the prime minister's team, and therefore the right, correct and exact story will come out." Olmert also reaffirmed Israel wants peace with Syria, but that Syria "has not stopped supporting terrorism, it needs to accept the principles that were set by the international community." Erdogan said with regard to the Palestine question that the new Palestinian government is a hope, and that a positive approach by Israel and the Middle East Quartet would be beneficial. "It is not possible to solve this with Mahmoud Abbas alone; there is a need for a strong government standing on its own feet. The formation of a unity government could affect the process positively." Erdogan also noted that he would invite members of the new Palestinian government to Ankara once the national unity government has been formed.

Olmert later met with President Sezer, Foreign Minister Gul, Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, and chairman of the Turkish union of esponse to a question on possible Turkish cross-border military incursions in northern Iraq, that he preferred peaceful methods, but that Turkey has a "right to self defense" if attacked.

Editorial Commentary on Northern Iraq, Russia's Efforts in Middle East
Okay Gonensin observes in the mass appeal Vatan: "The American administration has decided to leave Kirkuk to the control of the Kurds and the upcoming referendum will only make this official. Given the fact, Turkey's current responsibility should be working to eliminate pressure on the Turkmen community and helping to establish democratic as well as peaceful relations in this area. Northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders should also work with Turkey to discuss and to find ways to settle the Kirkuk issue through the involvement of Turkmen. Currently their attitude is to annoy Turkey even though it will not help anything. If northern Iraq will eventually be an independent state, its soil should not be a base for terrorism against its immediate neighbor. If the leaders of northern Iraq take some wise steps in this regard, they can pave the way for a new kind of relationship in the region. In the meantime, Turkey should be able to adopt domestic policies toward establishing a lasting peaceful atmosphere regarding its own Kurdish problem. This is the time for Turkey to take the steps in this regard -- steps which demonstrate Turkey's self-confidence."

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Zeynep Dagi comments in the Islamist-intellectual Zaman: "Putin is working toward winning over the Arab, especially after the growing hate for the West due to the American occupation of Iraq and Israeli attacks in Palestine and Lebanon. Putin's regard to the Iraq war sympathy in the Muncic and political reasons. Moscow is also trying to solve the

terrorism problem that it has been facing since the demise of the Soviet Union. Putin has become the first Russian president ever to visit Saudi Arabia. His tour of the Middle East countries raised many eyebrows in Israel and the US, but he was welcome by Arab leaders. Russia seems to be concentrating on new initiatives toward stability in the Middle East and toward establishing a multiple balance system as opposed to the US-based unilateralism."

Eastern Mediterranean Oil Crisis Looming

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report that despite objections from Ankara, the Greek Cypriot government opened a bidding process Thursday to license offshore oil and gas exploration. The first round of licensing involves 11 offshore areas totaling around 60,000 square kilometers off the southern shores of Cyprus. The Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) invited prospective bidders to exercise "common sense," saying in a statement yesterday, "Insisting on the tender process would affect peace and stability on Cyprus and in the eastern Mediterranean." Greek Cyprus signed a deal with Lebanon last month to facilitate future oil and gas exploration. It has a similar deal with Egypt. Ankara has warned both countries not to carry on with the deals. Ankara says Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots too have legitimate rights in the Mediterranean. Energy Minister Hilmi Guler said earlier this week that Turkey's state oil company TPAO will also explore oil in the eastern Mediterranean. The TPAO is now expected to issue tenders for international partners to search for oil and gas in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas.

Anniversary of PKK Leader's Capture Raises Tensions in Turkey

All papers: On the 8th anniversary of the PKK's jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan's arrest, there were many pro-Ocalan demonstrations in the southeastern region of Turkey yesterday. Several shop owners closed their shops to protest Ocalan's capture. In the provinces of Diyarbakir, Siirt, Sanliurfa and Mersin, streets filled with people protesting his arrest. In Sanliurfa, a group that attempted to make a press statement and hold a march was blocked by police. In Mersin, a group mostly made up of children, was dispersed by police after a short march with pro-Ocalan banners.

Meanwhile, Milliyet reports that, in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil, a march by members of Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party the local Peshmerge s tQial in Istanbul. Syrian citizen Louai Sakka Qs among 72 suspected al-Qaeda militants on tria, for alleged involvement in the bombings in Istanbul on November 15 and 20, 2003.

Putin's Speech Posted on General Staff Website

Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, Aksam, Bugun: Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 10 statement in Munich, in which Putin had strongly criticized the US and NATO, was placed on the Turkish General Staff's (TGS) internet site. Sabah notes that no other foreign leader's speech has been posted on the TGS website.

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TV Highlights

NTV (6 a.m.)

Domestic News

- Authorities are monitoring a woman in a village in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir who is suspected of having contracted bird flu. The village has been quarantined, and human health teams began checks of villagers.

- Prime Minister Erdogan said he was ready to take steps to improve ties with the Kurdish administration of northern Iraq.

- Opposition CHP is to launch a parliamentary inquiry against Prime Minister Erdogan and Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu for neglect in the Hrant Dink murder investigation.

- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki is to visit Turkey on February 20 to meet with Foreign Minister Gul as well as join a meeting of the Turkey-Iranian joint eco International News

ed a speech to the natio ways to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and bring peace to Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia expects the US to show the same flexibility in resolving the problem of Iran's nuclear program as it did with North Korea.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON